

Message Text

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PAGE 01 OTTAWA 00090 112253Z
ACTION EUR-12

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FOLLOWING TELEGRAM TRANSMITTED BY OTTAWA FOR
AMCONSUL CALGARY:

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJ: QUEBEC SEPARATISM - THE ALBERTA PERSPECTIVE

1. SUMMARY. WE BELIEVE THAT THE VAST MAJORITY OF
ALBERTANS ARE COMMITTED TO THE CANADIAN CONFEDERATION.
BUT, WHILE NATIONALIST SENTIMENT IS STRONG, MOST
ALBERTANS TEND TO THINK OF THEMSELVES AS WESTERN
CANADIANS, AND IT IS A WESTERN PERSPECTIVE WHICH
SHAPES AN AMBIVALENT ATTITUDE HERE TOWARDS QUEBEC
SEPARATISM.

2. WESTERN CANADIAN POLITICAL LORE HOLDS THAT THE
ECONOMIC INTERESTS OF THE PRAIRIE PROVINCES ARE
CONSISTENTLY COMPROMISED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE
TORONTO ESTABLISHMENT AND THIS TRADITIONAL RESENTMENT
OF THE EAST HAS BEEN REINFORCED IN RECENT YEARS
BY A GROWING SUSPICION THAT ALBERTA IS REGULARLY GIVEN
SHORT SHRIFT BY AN ARROGANT AND IDEOLOGICALLY
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PAGE 02 OTTAWA 00090 112253Z

UNSYMPATHETIC FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. ALBERTANS,
THEREFORE, ARE SOMEWHAT UNDERSTANDING OF THE QUEBECERS
FEELING OF ALIENATION FROM CENTRAL CANADA AND WHILE QUEBEC
SEPARATISM IS RESENTED AS A THREAT TO NATIONAL UNITY,
IT IS DEEMED BY MANY TO BE A LOGICAL OUTGROWTH OF
OTTAWA'S NEGLECT OF REGIONAL DIFFERENCES AND ONTARIO'S
CONTINUED DOMINATION OF THE CANADIAN ECONOMY.

CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL TIES AND AFFINITIES BIND ALBERTA TO CENTRAL CANADA BUT ECONOMIC SELF-INTEREST HAS IMPELLED ITS GOVERNMENT TO TAKE AN INDEPENDENT STANCE ON SUCH ISSUES AS ENERGY, TRADE, AND AGRICULTURE, AND TO SHOW A CERTAIN POLITICAL SYMPATHY FOR QUEBEC'S DESIRE FOR GREATER INDEPENDENCE.

3. ALBERTA PREMIER LOUGHEED, IN PARTICULAR, SEEMS TO BELIEVE THAT THE QUEBEC ISSUE MAY BE THE LEVER BY WHICH THE WEST CAN OBTAIN ITS LONG SOUGHT AFTER OBJECTIVE OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY WITH ONTARIO. HE HAS CONSISTENTLY WARNED OTTAWA THAT THE WISHES OF THE PEOPLE OF QUEBEC CANNOT BE CONCENTRATED UPON THE NEGLECT OF THE NEEDS OF THE WEST. THUS, WHILE WE THINK THAT ALBERTANS IN GENERAL WOULD BE WILLING TO GO ALONE WITH ACCOMMODATION OF QUEBECERS IN THE CONTEXT OF A CONTINUED CONFEDERATION, WE DOUBT THAT OTTAWA WILL RECEIVE MUCH VOCAL SUPPORT ON THIS ISSUE FROM EDMONTON UNLESS AND UNTIL SOME OF ALBERTA'S SPECIAL INTERESTS ARE TAKEN CARE OF.

4. WHILE THERE EXISTS IN ALBERTA A RESIDUAL "RED-NECK" ANTIPATHY TOWARDS FRENCH CANADA WHICH HAS BEEN MODERATELY ACERBATED BY THE BILINGUALISM ISSUE, THIS ELEMENT HAS AT PRESENT LIMITED POLITICAL SWAY. CONTINUED CONFRONTATION WITH OTTAWA ON ECONOMIC MATTERS COULD, HOWEVER, LEAD TO AN INCREASED SEPARATIST VOICE IN ALBERTA, A DEVELOPMENT WHICH COULD POSE PROBLEMS FOR LOUGHEED AND CONSTERNATION IN OTTAWA. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 OTTAWA 00090 112253Z

ENDERS

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Message Attributes

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